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### **Colorado mine spill: Toxic wastewater leak far exceeds first estimates**

Erin McClam

August 10, 3:45

A spill that sent toxic water seeping from an abandoned Colorado gold mine and turned a river orange is three times as large as first thought, the Environmental Protection Agency said.

The EPA said Sunday that 3 million gallons of wastewater had spilled from the mine, and the sludge was still flowing. The EPA said that health risks to humans and aquatic life were not yet clear.

On Wednesday, an EPA-supervised cleanup crew accidentally breached a debris dam that had formed inside the Gold King Mine, shuttered since 1923, sending a yellow-orange sludge leaking into the Animas River.

Water collected downstream showed higher than normal levels of arsenic, lead and other metals. In Durango, Colorado, the mayor assured people the water was safe to drink because the city shut off its intake valve from the Animas.

Still, "The river for us is an integral part of our community," state Sen. Ellen Roberts, who represents Durango, told MSNBC on Monday. "It's where people get married. People do their own private ceremonies along there. It's our daily life."

The discolored water reached New Mexico and by late Sunday was headed for Utah. Authorities there were planning to shut two wells that serve the town of Montezuma Creek. A tank of residential water in Halchita, Utah, was filled with water shipped from Arizona.